

Sikh Metaphysics



Modern Western Philosophy, Sikh Metaphysics and the Critique of Modernity: Guru Nanak Between Bhakti and Postmodernism¹

Modern Western philosophy can be an invaluable tool for exploring the undoubted profundity of the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. This does not mean that Sikh thought cannot in its turn bring fresh insights to the problems that concern contemporary philosophers in the West. The subcontinent produced one of the world's great philosophic traditions, but the history of colonization had a serious impact on how Indian philosophy was perceived by Westerners and sometimes by Indians as well: its capacity for real technical sophistication is rarely appreciated, and the fact that it approaches fundamental philosophic issues from a perspective that is distinct from that of the West is seen as "backward", rather than as being progressive in its own way². For example, there was not a "Cartesian moment" in the philosophy of the subcontinent, but this does not mean it did not make genuine advances in the understanding of human

consciousness and identity which could not be of sustained interest to twentieth century Western anti-Cartesian philosophers³.

Philosophy and Religion in India and the West

Philosophy and religion are differently connected in India and the West. The situation with regard to the latter is rather complicated because there is a kind of double disjunction between religion and philosophy on the one hand and within philosophy itself on the other. To start with, the Judeo-Christian tradition has a distinctly historical or messianic foundation: there is almost no philosophy in the Bible. Apart from the Genesis creation myth and the erotic and/or perhaps mystic love poem of the "Song of Songs", the "Old Testament" is primarily a narrative about a chosen people and its God, with a strong emphasis on law-giving, a relationship with a promised land and prophecy, even if there is poetry and figurative language. The "New Testament" has the brief *logos* passage at the beginning of the "Gospel of John", and Paul was clearly familiar with Greek

philosophy, but how much it influenced him is debateable. Otherwise, one mostly has the life of Christ, his and Paul's teaching, and early Christian history. Theologians added Greek metaphysics to this, initially drawing on Neoplatonism and, rather later in the Western Church, Aristotle⁴, but there was always an ambivalent attitude towards philosophy: however valuable it could be as a tool, it was thought to be pagan and not Christian and therefore slightly suspect. The combination of Judeo-Christian Bible and Greek metaphysics can sometimes seem like mixing oil and water.

This is particularly true with Neoplatonizing works, such as, for example, Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the "Song of Songs", which is beautifully written, intensely spiritual and very coherent in its own right, but it can feel as if something alien was being projected on to the Biblical text. In fairness, it can seem quite odd that the "Song of Songs" is actually in the Bible, which is why it has provoked so many allegorizing interpretations from Christian theologians over the centuries, and Gregory's might simply be one of them. However, in another work on the life of Moses, he does exactly the same thing, and in this case he

is dealing with a much more straightforward religious narrative. He divides his work into two parts, a short one called the "History of Moses", where he explicitly says that he does not want to dwell too much on purely historical questions, and a rather longer second part, a "Contemplation on the Life of Moses", where he explores three of the Biblical figure's encounters with God as three types of theophany that increase in intensity from one to the next. Again, there is great beauty in the writing and profound insight into spiritual experience, but one still feels that Gregory has turned the Biblical text into something else, however coherent it is in its own right. There was a tradition of very similar allegorical interpretations of Homer's epics by pre- or non-Christian Neoplatonic philosophers: Porphyry's commentary on a passage describing a cave of the nymphs from book XIII of the *Odyssey* is a famous example of this. Again, the philosopher's short text is very beautiful and has a real philosophic coherence in its own right, but one can feel that it has been projected on to the Homeric text.

There is, however, a real distinction to be made between the Bible and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The last two are still closely

connected with the Greek mythic world that Plato himself and the Neoplatonic philosophers drew on extensively and allegorized for metaphysical purposes, so it is not surprising that they should have been approached in this way. The Bible is historical or prophetic rather than mythic. Identity and time, even the way in which the future is perceived, are much more concrete in the Bible than they are in the very disembodied metaphysics of the Neoplatonists. This very much accounts for a cultural bias in the West for positivist history and utopian visions, but there was also a gap between a more literalist quality in religion and metaphysical side of Greek philosophy. This could produce complex creative fusions, such as with Augustine, but there was always the possibility of philosophy detaching itself from religion, especially because of its perceived pre-Christian, pagan roots. Aquinas' Aristotelian metaphysics do not present the same problem, but this is because Aristotle's metaphysics are a kind of higher level ontology: they are very different from the mystic cosmology of the Neoplatonic philosophers. This points to the other disjunction, the one referred to as being within philosophy itself: a division between more materialist and

idealist (or one could even say "animist") currents within Greek thought. This meant that a more materialist philosophy, again pre-Christian and pagan, could be used to undermine or attack Christian religious faith. Free-thinking in the West can often be seen as "throwing off the shackles" of religion in this way.

Indian religion is much more intrinsically philosophical, and can have aspects which are close to Greek metaphysics: there are similarities between Sikh and Stoic cosmology, for example⁵. There are two types of sacred text: the *sruti*, which are the most authoritative and include the Vedas and Upanishads, and the *smrti*, which are somewhat less so, but still very important in religious terms: the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and Puranas are amongst the works in this group. Philosophic speculation in the later Vedas and Upanishads developed seamlessly from discussions of myth and ritual in the early Vedas and became the basis for the six classical Indian philosophical systems. The two epics are closer to myth than history, and there is a great deal of philosophic as well as religious material in them, with the *Bhagavad Gita*, a very philosophical work, originally being part of the sixth book of the *Mahabharata*. The Puranas are sprawling

compendia of pretty much everything from cosmology, aspects of governance and geographic description to gemology, medicine, folklore and aphrodisiacs, but again, there plenty of mythic and philosophical material. The bhakti movement was closely linked to the Puranas, with the *Bhagavata Purana* being particularly important for the worship of Krishna.

The disjunctions between religion and philosophy and within philosophy in the West have stimulated real creativity to overcome them, but Indian religion could allow for a different kind of development: the centrality of metaphysics meant that one could move fairly easily from polytheism to theism to something almost approaching a concept from theoretical physics to downright atheism⁶. There was a similar quality to ancient Greek philosophy, but there was also a strong orientation towards materialist physics, which meant that there was a tendency to split physics and metaphysics. The early modern Western philosophers in the second half of the seventeenth century took this division even further, with the ultimate result being eighteenth century deism. The laws of nature might reflect their divine origin, but it practice God and

nature could be dealt with by separate disciplines: theology and empirical science. The Genesis narrative, with God as subject and the universe as object of creation very much enabled this separation. Continental philosophers and some Anglo-Saxon ones, such as F.H. Bradley, a neo-Hegelian, Whitehead and T.L.S. Sprigge, continued to produce metaphysics, but most British and American philosophers tended to avoid it: analytic philosophy was so named because it was not metaphysical. Anglo-Saxon philosophers also sometimes developed a close relationship with empirical science: this is true of the philosophy of mind and neuroscience, for example⁷. There is also a strong current of skepticism in analytic philosophy, mainly derived from Hume, which makes it eschew almost all speculation about "immaterial problems". One thinks of R.M. Hare's injunction that one cannot deal with morals: one can only deal with the language of morals, a perfectly legitimate and sincerely held philosophic position, even if one may not fully agree with it.

However, there is a more general cultural prejudice in the West about modernity, secularism and a skepticism about religious faith, which can at best be seen as a private matter in a non-

religious society or world or at worst as a mark of backwardness⁸. There is not enough room here to discuss the contradictions in this secular modernism or how it can serve quasi-racist ends, but it clearly has had an impact on how the subcontinent - seen as a land of faith - is perceived. Modern charismatic gurus, popular devotion and Indian philosophy are all rolled into one generalized slightly anti-intellectual bundle, when a classical philosopher, such as Sankara is not intrinsically less rational than those of his Western counterparts who operated within a metaphysical framework that included God, such as Malebranche, Leibniz, Kant or Hegel. There is though a slightly more subtle problem in relation to Sikhism, where an intense spirituality is involved. Nevertheless, the *SGGS* may often be rhapsodic, deeply poetic and infused by music, but it is never irrational or incoherent, nor does it lack a serious knowledge of the Hindu religious tradition or its philosophy.

Immanent Sikh Metaphysics: The Pantheistic Side and Bhakti

What primarily distinguishes Sikh thought from the previous mainstream Indian religious/philosophical tradition is that it is not idealist. An idealist philosophy is usually transcendental and opposed to a materialist one. There is also usually a distinction between the sensible (that is the kind of physical reality accessible to sensory perception) and the intelligible (that is an invisible, usually ultimate or absolute, reality which can only be grasped by the mind)⁹. There is usually some kind of immaterial entity on a superior level that creates, determines and regulates material existence, which is on an inferior level. The latter at best reflects its creator - one knows an artist or a workman by his art or work - while at worst it nothing more than mere appearance. Either way, it must be transcended by the intellect, that is something beyond the senses, to gain access to a higher truth. Allowing for the ambiguities and complicated layers in Vedic and Upanisadic thought and the fact that there are six schools of philosophy that seek to organize this thought in slightly different ways, this is pretty much what happens in the mainstream Indian religious/philosophic tradition, which on the whole regards *maya* (the world) as false and illusory and considers such truths

as *moksa* (liberation) and *dharma* (righteous living) as only to be obtained by mental activity, even if revelation in scriptural texts can play a part. Sikhism differs from this in two very significant ways.

Firstly, the Sikh God - *Ik Onkar* (Dynamic Creative Being) - is everywhere in the universe: everything in it is literally her/him. This means that her/his *hukam* (command) operates in a philosophically fascinating way: she/he does not tell the flower to grow so much as she/he is the flower growing. When one sees a beautiful sunset or the starry expanse of a night sky¹⁰, it is her/him, and one can experience *vismad* (wonder) at her/his majesty¹¹. She/he is the pretty salwar kameez one puts on as the soul-bride as one yearns for one's ever loving husband-lord. The *SGGS* is full of verbs like pervade, permeate, imbue, drench or dye for the action of Waheguru in relation to matter¹², and there is much that comes from bhakti and Sufi spirituality - including the bhagats of course - and folkloric elements, such as the *barahmasa* tradition¹³. Images from farming, crafts and aspects of selling, such as weighing, are common. There is a real valorization of the physical world and even some of its sensuality

here, but there are definite limits to this, which can be understood if one considers why the famous Mira Bhai poem in the *Kartarpur Pothis* was eventually left out of the final version of the *SGGS*¹⁴. From a theological point of view, Gurinder Singh Mann is quite right to say that a poem addressed to Krishna (or Giridhar) would be quite out of place in a sacred text connected with a religion that believed in God as *nirankar*, but there are also real aesthetic differences which express important philosophic ones, which are closely linked to this quasi-pantheistic side of the Sikh approach to God. Mira's poems, and this includes the Katarpur one, are very dramatic, with a very defined "leading character", whose voice may undergo radical changes of emotion and register, but she remains very much herself and mostly directs her utterances to other "characters", mainly to an absent personalized God. This points to an underlying ontology (that is the branch of philosophy connected with the nature of being) of relatively consolidated identity.

The *SGGS* is by comparison a kind of symphonic poem or symbolist play: persons and objects are indeed real, but they do not have precisely defined contours and a fully plastic, three-

dimensional quality. They emerge from, but are still bound into, the continuous cosmic flux produced by *Ik Onkar*, and they are also part of a much larger signifying architecture, often appearing in metaphorical pairs (soul-bride/husband-lord) or clusters (the extended references involving different stages in farming), where meaning results from a kind of invisible current in which the elements seem to circulate and come together without quite solidifying into a structured progression or whole, quite unlike a tightly ordered sequence or accumulation of discrete meanings, each linked to an individual element. It is consequently very difficult to identify with the soul-bride in the *SGGS* in the way that one does with the speaker in the poems of Mira, and affect becomes much more diffuse, not finding its "target" in the figure in the poem and returning back to reinforce the identity of the devotee, however much it may have become spiritually inspired: instead she is opened out by her surge of affect into what she now experiences as the sacralized expanse of the infinite universe. Dante's "Paradiso", the final section of his *La Divina Commedia*, is rooted in, but transcends, the *dolce stil novo* lyric poetry that preceded it in much the same way.

What has been described as happening in the *SGGS* is also very close to Deleuze's ontology of difference and becoming, logic of sense and the centrality of affect in his philosophy¹⁵.

Immanent Sikh Metaphysics: The *Nirankar* Side and Deleuze

The other significant way in which Sikhism differs from the previous mainstream Indian religious and philosophic tradition is in its characterization of God as *nirankar* (the Formless One). As has been said, idealist philosophies usually involve two separate levels: a "higher" intelligible one and a "lower" sensible one, with the former determining the latter in a quite a variety of different sorts of relationships between the two. What often happens, though, is that a kind of homologous or tautological connexion develops between what increasingly become two objects mirroring each other: a physical one and a mental one. This can be very useful for identity across change: Descartes' wax was still wax whether it was liquid or solid, or a woman is the same woman after she has had a baby, or she has had a mastectomy. Or identification as a member of a group or species: a dachshund

is a type of dog, while a domestic cat and a tiger have the same ancestry, or a man is identified as Muslim in an anti-Muslim pogrom because he is circumcised. Clearly, however, the second examples in the two sentences have much more "going on" in them than the first ones. They involve tipping points: the woman's personality might undergo a change, and the man is being identified as Muslim in an upsurge of violence when communal relations were probably perfectly good the week before. The sort of homologous or tautological connexion between the physical and mental objects mirroring each other makes for too much rigidity of identity or identification to deal in a sophisticated way with such tipping point problems. An ontology of becoming and a philosophy of the event can do so: Deleuze is a major exponent of both of these. What does this have to do with the Sikh God as *nirankar* ?

Jaspreet Singh's *Helium* is a sensitive and complex novel about the trauma of the Sikh massacres in 1984 and the Indian government's ongoing refusal to bring the perpetrators to justice or acknowledge any culpability. Raj, not a Sikh, was a favourite pupil of a Sikh professor, who was burnt alive in front of him

during the massacres. He goes on to become a professor of engineering at Cornell but re-establishes contact with the widow of his professor, Nelly, also a Sikh, twenty-five years later in Shimla. He eventually discovers that his father, an important officer in the police, was complicit in the massacres. There is a beautiful moment when Nelly tells Raj about a visit to Harmandar with her husband shortly after their honeymoon. His special area of research was helium, and he started to talk about it, inspired by the reflection of the sun in the pool. He moved on to neutrinos, invisible particles, without charge or mass, which can go right through you or the surrounding buildings. He says: "For neutrinos there are no walls, Nelly." She replies: "Harmandar has no walls. I almost levitated while saying this to Mohan. It is open to all the people in the world, the entire human race. He looked at me with deep affection, and it was at that precise moment I think I fell in love with him."¹⁶

This image of Harmandar is deeply rooted in the Sikh psyche and could almost be said to define what it is to be Sikh at a pre-verbal level, but how has it been constructed? The very idea or definition of a building or temple is that it has relatively solid

sides which keep people in and out and the odd door where one can control entries and exits. A building or temple where the doors "replace" the walls, and the flow of people in and out is unimpeded has "undone" or "unravelling" or "dissolved" this idea or definition. In a certain sense, it is no longer a building or temple, and yet it still is, and a radical transformation in meaning has taken place, producing an extremely intense level of affect, at least to a Sikh. This affect is not mere escapism because it emerges from a mechanism of paradox and pure becoming¹⁷. There is only one plane of immanence in Sikhism - no transcendental plane or God - so God as *nirankar* is just as immanent to the universe as *Ik Onkar*, the One Being who dynamically creates it. "Unforming" and forming are inextricably bound together in creation in a process that has many affinities with Deleuze's ontology of difference. In neither case does a transcendental template cut out identical gingerbread men, one after another, all repetitions of the same. The *SGGS* and Deleuze both emphasize the individuality of each morsel of the universe: Deleuze calls it *haecceité* (thisness). In Deleuze, this comes about through the repetition of the same differential that has produced

identity and is still within it, rather than the repetition of the identity itself¹⁸. In Sikhism, there is a fully integrated element of formlessness at the core of every moment of the continuous divine moulding of form. There is a real affinity here with Deleuze's discussion in the sixth series of *Logic of Sense* of Lacan's famous paper on Edgar Allen Poe's *The Purloined Letter* (*La Lettre volée* in French translation), where there is a slippery interplay between a moving object without a space and an empty space without an object¹⁹.

It is true that this is not how one normally talks about Sikh thought, but it is a legitimate exploration of the implications of the *SGGS*, using certain tools from modern Western philosophy. The intention is not to be clever, but to access a deeper level of intangible Sikh belief in a technical way that does not always come through in the often very erudite books on Sikh philosophy by such authors as Dr. Jodh Singh, Surindar Singh Kohli or Wazir Singh or in more inspirational homiletic works by figures such as Giani Sant Singh Ji "Maskin" or Raghbir Singh Bir. In the West, both analytic and Continental philosophy engage rigorously with philosophers from the past as they were still alive today. Treating

Sikh thought in this way can actually sharpen one's sense of its real particularity: it is sometimes allowed to drift into notions that are not quite it. This happens in *Helium*: the attentive reader may have noticed that people do not go through "unwalls" in the way that neutrinos go through actual walls. Nelly could be "correcting" her husband, but this is unlikely because of the overall pattern of images in the novel. Raj is a rheologist who studies the deformation and flow which result from an unresolved past in "complex materials" which have memories, while helium, his professor and Nelly's husband's area of special research interest, is a rare gas on earth but makes up twenty-three percent of the universe and provides the illumination by which humans can see²⁰. Obviously, Jaspreet Singh is writing a novel, and this imagery works in a very beautiful and poetic way, but it is not exactly Sikh²¹. It is very redolent of the Cartesian mind-body split or an Enlightenment battle between the forces of darkness and light. The blending of *dukh* (suffering) and *sukh* (happiness) in Sikhism is much more integrated, and the progression from one to the other much more subtle. The devotee's trust in the guidance of an ineffable Waheguru who is

both the helium and the "complex material" goes beyond such binary polarities. Again, Deleuze's ideas are valuable: the avoidance of either the heights or depths in the eighteenth series on the three images of philosophers in *Logic of Sense*²². It would also be hard to find a more suitable approach to Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom than the recurrent references to being *digne de l'événement* (worthy of the event) and the *gloire* (glory) and *splendeur* (splendor) that comes from it that are to be found in the same work²³. One should add that as an ontologist of becoming, Deleuze is also a process philosopher, whose attitude to truth is not that it should be hunted down as prey which can be defined in exact objective terms²⁴. This accords very well with Sikh spirituality, which is more about internal process than external dogma and aims at a truth which is ineffable. Of course, this does not exclude a remarkable capacity for organization, a important aspect of collective ethos, excellent spiritual and moral guidance and established doctrines and rituals, but it has an esoteric vision at its core which is most epitomized by Guru Nanak's *Japji*.

An Indian Analytic Approach to *Japji*

Satnam Kaur and S.K. Saxena's little book on *Japji* - they use the more authentic spelling *Japuji* - is as much a devotional volume as a philosophic one²⁵. A little under half of it is Guru Nanak's actual text in Gurmukhi, Devanagari and Romanized script. It is a pleasure to use, as its overall design is discreetly beautiful, with a careful choice of details such as type faces, quality of paper and delicate warmish brown borders to the pages on which *Japji* is printed. However, Satnam Kaur and Saxena are senior accomplished Indian academic philosophers, both of whom come out of Western philosophic traditions, but not the Continental one from Heidegger onwards that this article has mostly explored up until this point. About twenty years ago, Satnam Kaur produced a superb work applying philosophical hermeneutics - her background is in analytic philosophy - to the concepts of faith, grace and prayer in Sikhism²⁶. An impeccable grasp of the *SGGS* and its linguistic details becomes much more than a common sense description of the surface of a text based on philological analysis, however valuable this can be, because philosophers are trained to puzzle out and construct logically

coherent concepts that can operate on a very deep level within a text, either one they are studying or one they are producing²⁷. There can be real parallels between this process and intense spiritual development, especially in India, with the close connection between philosophy and religion, as well as the existence of different *yoga* or *marga*. One of the joys of *Three Basics of Sikh Religious Thought* is that its author's intellectual subtlety manages to communicate the genuine sublimity of the gurus' esoteric experience, which is of course contained within the *SGGS*. There is also an important relationship between faith and reason in Sikhism, which emphasizes *bibek buddhi* (discriminating intellect) as much the love of the soul-bride for her husband-lord.

S. K. Saxena was actually the supervisor of the thesis which became *Three Basics of Sikh Religious Thought*. His first book was on F. H. Bradley, but he then explored a number of philosophers, including Benedetto Croce, Susanne K. Langer and John Dewey. There was a tendency in Western philosophy in the first half of the twentieth century which sought to counter positivism and to deal with problems that had arisen in epistemology (that is the

branch of philosophy connected with the nature of knowledge) since the time of Descartes. A division had emerged between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge. Idealism also contributed to this division. An attempt was made to surmount it by recourse to intuition, aesthetics and symbolic activity in art, myth or ritual. Croce, Langer and Dewey²⁸ all fit in to this tendency, which was somewhat superseded in the second half of the twentieth century by later developments in phenomenology, deconstruction and poststructuralism or by analytic philosophy, which tended not to be interested in the arts. Saxena moved on to evolve a system of Hindustani aesthetics in a series of books, including one on Kathak dance. There is of course a Sikh aesthetics, which is why the design of Satnam Kaur and Saxena's little book on *Japji* has been mentioned, but one of the limitations of the Western philosophers who looked at artistic expression in the first half of the twentieth century is that they treated it in a generic way. It is perfectly fair to say that the arts do not "argue" in the way that discursive reason does, but that does not mean that the "arguments" they make are all the same philosophically. Ontologically or metaphysically, Kleist is not

saying the same thing as Goethe, or Sikh devotional song as Carnatic music. Later twentieth century French philosophers were particularly good at exploring the different philosophical intuitions to be found in avant-garde and more normative aesthetics. Later in this article, two poems by Keats and Puran Singh will be examined to demonstrate the distinctive philosophical intuitions in Sikh artistic expression, which may well be of interest to modern anti-Cartesian Western philosophers. For the moment, the combination of the philosophical, devotional and aesthetic in *Japuji: A Look Anew* should be emphasized.

The substance of Satnam Kaur and Saxena's excellent introductory essay is to be found in chapters two, three and four, the first two dealing in a brilliant but dense and rigorous way with the *Mul Mantra* and its attributes, with the last being a more expansive discussion of the how and why of devotion and the rest of *Japji*, in particular the five *khands*. A certain hermeneutic method characterizes the authors' approach to bringing together the attributes of the *Mul Mantra* or phrases from across *Japji* or the *SGGS* as a whole. They are not simply made to repeat or

reinforce each other in the way one might pick out all the reds in a painting and "string" them together. Rather as one might understand how a particular red is altered by a particular purple in a given painting and vice versa, they understand the attributes or phrases in terms of how their meanings interact, how they modify each other²⁹. This method is especially fruitful in chapter three, where it is applied to the attributes of the *Mul Mantra*. The result is the sensation of a tightly-knit, logically coherent whole, similar to a stone cupola or arch where no mortar has been used, and the elements hold each other up. However, these attributes relate to and are suitable for a God that is *nirankar*, something the authors bring out very well. This combination of a kind of intellectual plasticity and formlessness is a more philosophical version of the intuitive Sikh notion of the "open" walls of Harmandir that came into Jaspreet Singh's *Helium*. Discussions of God as *saguna* (with qualities) and *nirguna* (without qualities) in Sikhism often feel like the phrase that a circle has one side and an infinity of sides, that is they rarely grasp the intensity of the paradox that God is literally everything and has infinite attributes, but also *nirankar* and has no

attributes, while still being immanent³⁰. Satnam Kaur and Saxena do achieve this in the way they discuss the attributes of *Mul Mantra*.

Chapter two mainly interprets the phrase *sat naam* in the *Mul Mantra*. *Naamjapa* (recitation of the Name) is an absolutely central aspect of Sikh devotional practice. The phrase *sat naam* can be translated as "her/his Name is true", but that predicates "true" on "Name" and leads one to ask: which name ? For example Hari (often repeated as Har, Har) and Ram are frequently mentioned in the *SGGS*, and there are plenty of other names as well, such as *dayaal* (beneficent lord) or *saahib* (lord). This, however, trivializes the matter, since, as Satnam Kaur and Saxena point out in chapter four, the point is not which name one recites but the devotion with which one recites it. The authors therefore opt for another translation of *sat naam*: "Truth is her/his Name". This involves a shift from a predicate to something ontological, that is a thing³¹. Truth can be equated to Absolute or Ultimate Reality, which is what *Ek Onkar* is. *Sat* and *naam* are in fact both nouns³², so there is something to be said for "truth" rather than "true". However, similar uses of *sat* in

phrases like *satguru* and *satsamgat* translate more readily as "true Guru" or "true company". However, "Truth is her/his name" feels very right philosophically and devotionally. Possibly *sat* slides a little between adjectival and substantive, as words are more fluidly connected in the language of the *SGGS* than they are in modern English. This would mean there was an interesting recipricocity, with the particularity of the Name - a name singles out something - being true but that particularity being absorbed into the Truth of the whole. All names of God would be true because she/he is Truth, but the latter would remain immanent to the individual names which are true.

The Social Dimension of Guru Nanak's Thought: Bhakti or Postmodernism ?

The complex recipricocity between the devotee and God is a runnning theme in *Japuji: A Look Anew*, and its authors explore this very distinctive aspect of Sikhism with immense intelligence and sensitivity. Everything comes from God, even the capacity of the devotee to love her/him - and of course philosophize about

her/him - but all gifts from God include a pro-active element as an intrinsic part of the nature of the gift. Human beings also have a capacity for rationality, which makes them able to receive this gift. Sikh faith may be intense, but it is not blind, superstitious or passive. This is one of the main reasons why ritualistic religion is rejected in Sikhism. Nor does the soul-bride enter into an "interpersonal" relationship with God: she/he is not a personal God, and the devotee needs to overcome her *haumai* (ego). This overcoming involves humility but not excessive self-abasement. It is more the removal of something which impedes a connectivity with a universe which is pervaded by an immanent God who is simultaneously in everything and *nirankar*. The soul-bride becomes a loved and loving but intelligent (*bibek buddhi*) and responsible particularity within creation. One can see where the Sikh metaphysics discussed earlier in this article play an essential role here. Unfortunately, in spite of their superb analysis of the *Mul Mantra* and its attributes, including some perceptive thoughts on the nature of an impersonal God in chapter three that remind one of Spinoza, they mainly communicate Sikh metaphysics in an intuitive way, based on

their delicate response to the poetry of *Japji* and the *SGGS* and the esoteric side of Guru Nanak's spirituality. This can be a very productive approach: the discussion of the five *khands* in chapter four gives a real sense of them as immanent visions, what the universe actually is if one understands it as a result of a deep and liberating *saadhnaa* (spiritual disciple), not transcendental or utopian ones.

The problem with this is that it tends to slip too much into the bhakti religion version of an early Sikhism that gave way to a Jat-dominated one in the well-known McLeod narrative. This is enhanced by references to figures such as Mira Bai and Tulsidas and using Vinoba Bhave as the main commentator for *Japji*. Clearly, the Sikh *panth* did evolve over time, and there were Jats, Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa, and a Sikh empire under Ranjit Singh, but from the very beginning Sikhism had a remarkable capacity for organization and a highly developed social outlook that was totally bound up with its devotional side³³. This is not really true of other bhakti *panths*, such as those of Kabir or Namdev or the groups associated with Mira Bai³⁴. In the excellent introduction to his volume of translations of

vacanas in Kannada by Virasaiva saints from South India, A. K. Ramanujan uses a terminology of structure and anti-structure taken over from Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process* to distinguish between the "great" pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition and "little" regional ones in local languages³⁵. Sikhism actually combines structure and anti-structure in a rather unusual way: its often poetic and intuitive expression of what is actually a very coherent metaphysical system is an example of this. This article has made use of perspectives taken from Western philosophy to explore this coherence, which one has to grapple with in order to fully understand the link between private devotion and social engagement in Sikh thought.

This understanding could make a real contribution to a problem connected with the social advancement of marginalized or subaltern groups or individuals within the modern bourgeois liberal Western or Westernized world, which does seem to be beset with difficulties, which are not mitigated by simplistic self-congratulation, even if obviously some progress has been made. To move upwards in society, such groups or individuals need to acquire their own possessive individualist identity - such as the

"pink" or "grey" dollar or pound - or be part of a tightly-knit, economically successful sub-culture, where individuals help each other on the basis of ethnic or religious ties. Altruistic members of dominant groups are often so in order to gain moral ammunition in the competition with other members of their particular group, or they can be upwardly mobile people trying to reinforce their place within the dominant group³⁶. Modern Western universal rights of the individual do not necessarily help with this problem. Indeed, they partly cause it, as they juxtapose an abstract realm of transcendental values and concrete individuals in such a way that tends to exclude an intervening space which is both tangible and moral. This is why Western-style societies and states can often be seen in terms which pull them up to abstraction or down to self-interest³⁷. The overcoming of *haumai* (ego) in the context of a universe where God is immanent, pervading everything but also *nirankar* offers possibilities of filling this "empty" space in a morally textured way. A great deal of Western modern political theory loosely based on philosophers such as Deleuze or Foucault involves the notion of micropolitics, organic and localized development, a

renewal in social relations, and the spontaneous emergence of grass-roots movements. These writers do not always have the philosophic rigour of Foucault or Deleuze, and their work can sometimes simply be a more interpersonal or "touchy-feely" version of Western liberalism. Once removed from the straight jacket of being either backward and traditional or keeping up with Western values, Sikhism has real affinities with Deleuze or Foucault at their most complex. As well as the more personal and metaphysical sides which have been discussed in this article, it has very resonant and sophisticated ideas on economic activity, community, *seva* (service to others) and *sarbat da bhala* (well being of everyone in the world). It would take another article to show how valuable these ideas could be for the current crisis in Western-style liberal democracy.

Sikh Thought and Some More Technical Aspects of Deleuze

For the moment, a few more connections will be made between Sikh thought and the work of Deleuze. The complex recipricocity between God and the devotee which was very well

explored by Satnam Kaur and Saxena makes one think of Stoic causality, which was an important influence on Deleuze³⁸. Rather than *A* simply causing *x* in *B*, with the focus being on the two bodies, *A* has the capacity to cause *x* in something, and *B* has the capacity to have *x* caused in it. So a scalpel cuts flesh because it has the capacity to cut, and flesh has the capacity to be cut, and fire burns wood because it has the capacity to burn, and wood has the capacity to be burnt. The "being cut" and "being burnt" are incorporeal predicates to be distinguished from the two bodies, who become causes to each other of the predicate. A teacher and pupil are causes to each other of the predicate "making progress". Furthermore, the incorporeal predicate becomes a kind of quasi-cause of what happens between the two bodies. Deleuze uses this for his ideas on sense and the event because the Stoics also thought of the incorporeal predicates as *lekta* (sayables), that is what one can say about something, in other words meaning or sense. It also accounts for the way in which he talks about the effect as the cause of the cause and the cause as the effect of the cause in the event.

This can actually be a very good way of understanding the complexity of the devotee's relationship to God's *hukam*. She is not an individual bowing to a more powerful individual's will, but a part of God because her overcoming of *haumai* has allowed her to come to know her real self. This means in a way, she and God collaborate in her/his *hukam*, and yet God's *hukam* also directs everything. *Sens* in French (and Deleuze) actually means both sense or meaning and direction³⁹. It is very interesting to think about God's *hukam* as bringing meaning and direction to all creation rather than as her/his order or command, which of course is the proper translation.

There is another image of collaborative causality in Stoicism: the stones in a vault are causes to each other of the predicate "remaining": they are not the causes of each other. This reminds one of the rather fluid way in which images in the *SGGS* circulate within clusters without solidifying into a logical sequence which was mentioned above⁴⁰. However, there is a further level of complexity in these image clusters which needs to be discussed. Again, there is a connection with Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*, this time to the seventh series on esoteric words, but one can also

look at the first three sections of the opening chapter on desiring machines (*machines désirantes*) of *Anti-Oedipus*, a book written in collaboration with Félix Guattari. These sections are very closely linked to the series in question from *Logic of Sense*, even if the subject matter may at first appear to be rather different⁴¹. *Anti-Oedipus* came out in 1972, only three years after *Logic of Sense*, but it is the first major work Deleuze wrote with Guattari, who was trained as a psychoanalyst, which means that the joint book draws extensively on psychoanalysis more or less all the way through, while Deleuze's solo one only refers to it in the later series (the twenty-seventh to the thirty-third), although there is an important early series (the thirteenth) on Artaud and schizophrenia⁴².

What the series on esoteric words and the first three sections of the chapter on desiring machines have in common is that they both employ a taxonomy of connection, conjunction and disjunction as types of syntheses, but they do so in relation to different material. The first one draws on Lewis Carroll, an important figure in *Logic of Sense*⁴³, to discuss the links between series, either those of events or propositions. It is to the latter

that the threefold taxonomy of syntheses is applied, with phrases from Carroll's works, mostly portmanteau words, being used to explore it. Connection (or contraction) is when the syllables of a proposition are contracted into a phrase that can name it with one syllable: "y'reince" for "Your royal Highness" is an example of this. Conjunction (also called coexistence or circulating) happens in a word like "snark", which combines "shark" and "snake" but circulates between them because it is designating something "beyond them" which is invisible and does not exist. Disjunction is when the two coexisting series are brought together with a kind of spreading out (*ramification*) into both series that has a richer, more tangible quality than conjunction/circulation does. An example of disjunction is the reply "Rilchiam" when one does not know whether the right answer to a question is king "William" or "Richard". In this case, "Rilchiam" manages to be both/and and something which is neither/nor at the same time. It is this emerging something which is neither/nor but is still designating a concrete both/and which takes disjunction beyond circulation.

How does this relate to the image clusters in the *SGGS* ? Disjunctive synthesis is particularly relevant to a specific type of extended metaphorical passage where elements from a spiritual process, such as consciousness, good actions, *naam* or *sabad* are matched up one by one with precise stages in a practical physical process, such as writing, farming, cheese-making or weighing something. These passages are very common in the *SGGS* and have usually been seen as part of an attempt to bring people from lower castes (artisans, farmers, shopkeepers) into Sikhism. There may well be some truth in this, but how the metaphoric matching up operates is very complex and potentially interesting from a philosophical point of view. First, some examples, three from "Siree Raag" and two from "Raag Soohi":

"Burn emotional attachment, and grind it into ink. Transform your intelligence into

the purest of paper. Make the love of the Lord your pen, and let your

consciousness be the scribe. Then, seek the Guru's Instructions, and record these

deliberations. Write the Praises of the Naam, the Name of the Lord; write over and

over again that He has no end or limitation. O Baba, write such an account, that

when it is asked for, it will bring the Mark of Truth."

"Make this body the field, and plant the seed of good actions. Water it with the

Name of the Lord, who holds all the world in his hands. Let your mind be the

farmer; the Lord shall sprout in your heart, and you shall attain the state of

Nirvaanaa."

"Make good deeds the soil, and let the word of the Shabad be the seed; irrigate it

continually with the water of Truth. Become such a farmer, and faith will sprout.

This brings knowledge of heaven and hell, you fool ! "

"Wash the vessel, sit down and annoint it with fragrance; then go out and get the

milk. Add the rennet of pure consciousness to the milk of good deeds, and then

free of desire, let it curdle. Chant the Name of the One Lord. All other actions are

fruitless. Let your mind be the handles, and then churn it without sleeping. If you

chant the Naam, the Name of the Lord with you tongue, then the curd will be

churned. In this way, the Ambrosial Nectar is obtained."

"Mind is the scale, consciousness the weights, and the performance of Your

service is the appraiser. Deep within my heart, I weigh my Husband Lord; in this

way I focus my consciousness. You Yourself are the balance, the weights and the

scale; You Yourself are the weigher. You Yourself see, and You Yourself

understand; You Yourself are the trader.⁴⁴"

What Deleuze means by a series of propositions is the set or group of things one can say about a given realm or area of reality, such as animals, domestic appliances, the rights of citizens or why one loves someone. One can see that these passages bring together two such series, one connected with practical physical

activities of an everyday kind, the other with Sikh spiritual process. There is a very sustained and exact correspondence made between individual terms from each series, but this produces a rather complicated effect. Physical reality usually involves precise stages which have to follow each other: one cannot reach the summit of a mountain until one has climbed its lower slopes, or one cannot be forty until one has been thirty-five. This is true of the physical activities described in the passages from the *SGGS*. One cannot write until one has the paper, one cannot water the field until one has planted the seeds, and one cannot curdle the milk until one has put it in the vessel. However, there is a simultaneous reciprocal causality in the relationship between the elements in the spiritual process. *Naamjapa* does indeed lead one to faith or Truth, but it is inefficacious if one's faith and sense of Truth are not already developed to a certain degree, and good deeds or actions do make one's consciousness purer but they also reflect a purity that is already there. If one looks at the two farming passages from "Siree Raag", which are very close together in the *SGGS*, the seeds are either good actions planted in the body of the devotee

or the word of the Shabad planted in good deeds, and the water is either the Name or Truth.

It is worth looking at the precise details of the matching up in the original language:

"ih tan dhartee beej karmaa karo salil aapaa-o saaringpaanee
man kirsaan har ridai jammaa-ay lai i-o paavas pad
nirbaanee⁴⁵"

"amal kar dhartee beej sabdo kar sach kee aab nit deh paanee
ho-ay kirsaan eemaan jammaa-ay lai bhisat dojak moorhay
ayv jaanee⁴⁶"

Dhartee (earth) is used in both cases, so the translator's "field" in the first passage has the right sense of course, but the repetition of the word has not been picked up. *Beej* (seed),

kirsaan (farmer) and *jammaa-ay* (more perhaps to be born than sprout, but the latter is still a perfectly good translation) are also repeated. *Dhartee* and *beej* come together in both passages and act as a kind of "hinge", with what is equated with the earth coming just before *dhartee* and what it is seeded with immediately following *beej*. This makes it particularly evident that the phrase for "good works" (either *karmaa karo* or *amal kar*) has shifted from being seed to earth and been replaced as seed by *sabdo kar* (more perhaps the action of *sabad*). The watering part of farming is a constant, but it is indicated by three different words: *salil* in the first passage and *aab* and *paanee* in the second⁴⁷. What the water is changes though: it is God herself/himself, the one who holds the world in her/his hands (the *naam* is not actually mentioned) or *sach* (truth). *Kirsaan* and *jammaa-ay* appear in both passages, but *man* (mind) or the devotee is the farmer, and God (*har*) is born in the heart (*ridai*) or faith (*eemaan*) is born.

Metaphors normally involve a much tighter connection between individual terms from different series, with extended ones sustaining that tight connection over two successions of

terms from different series put in parallel. Here, there is an asymmetry between how the two series are ordered, and one feels the interaction between a very structured physical process and a much more fluid spiritual one. The fluidity of the latter is related to aspects of Sikhism that have already been explored in this article: God is in everything in the universe, and there is a very reciprocal relationship between her/him and the devotee. Indeed, there is a lengthy rhapsodic moment in "Siree Raag" just before the first of the two farming passages which says, among other things, that God is the enjoyer and the enjoyment, the bride in her dress and the bridegroom on the bed, the fisherman and the fish, and the pool and the soul-swan. In the weighing passage from "Raag Soohree", the last of the five examples cited in English, there is totally natural movement from the matching up of the terms from the physical and spiritual series to God being the physical terms and then the trader who doing the weighing, except of course this is a different kind of weighing⁴⁸.

Sikh Ethics, Connectivity and Immanentist Metaphysics

A deep philosophical point is being communicated by the matching up of these asymmetrical series. Deleuze's notion of disjunctive synthesis is closely bound up with the belief that there is or can be a high level of connectivity between series in the universe. There is reciprocal causation here: the use of disjunctive synthesis creates or reveals more connections, but it is the initial connectivity that makes disjunctive synthesis possible. Clearly, Waheguru pervading everywhere corresponds to this overall Deleuzian hyperconnectivity, but the passages are joining together two types of series, one that is fluid and spiritually expansive and another that is more governed by natural laws and bound by material process. The two coexist and interpenetrate in the universe. If one drops a glass on a marble floor, it will not break a hundred times out of a hundred, but it will break enough times out of a hundred that it is sensible not to drop it. If one opens one's door in London in the morning, one might see an urban fox, but one is unlikely to see a lion, unless one lives in Southall, and then it will be a different kind of lion. There is enough regularity in the universe to make empirical

science possible, but there is also a great deal that is unexpected, mysterious or downright frightening, so some kind of faith or trust in the ability of cosmic process to right itself over time. This does not need to involve a personal god setting up the rules of the game of the universe and then leaving it "play itself" or intervening directly in every single move.

The Sikh version of pantheism or Deleuze's animate materialism offer something which is much more subtle: a network of connectivity across the universe that is open to real chaos and intense conflict but ultimately holds together and has a directionality, that is Sikh *hukam* (God's command) or Deleuzian *sens* (meaning/direction). Neither a detached Cartesian vantage point nor total loss of self and immersion are suitable for "reading" this flux of particularities, full of complex differentials, yet coherent. This is why one overcomes *haumai* (ego) in Sikhism or dissolves the *cogito* and complexifies the self in Deleuze: in both cases it opens up the boundaries of the self and enables one to blend enough with the flux to feel it rather than judge it, without however losing the capacity to navigate or act. This relationship between self and world can become so

abstracted from concrete reality in the work of some Deleuzians - Brian Massumi is a very good example of this⁴⁹ - that one can end up not being able to distinguish between globalization, neo-liberalism and the movements that are supposed to resist them. In a sense, they have all become equally desubstantialized and lacking in soul, still theoretically immanent so but removed from matter that the overall effect is that of some type of insipid idealism. The intuition and reason that Massumi seeks to reconcile are both ultimately cerebral responses to an immaterial connectivity that skims over the surface of the actual world. It is like avoiding casualties by bombing a country that one only knows from television pictures.

One can contrast this with Guru Nanak's reaction to Babur's invasions. He does not flinch at describing the horrors inflicted on the local population by the warfare, and he definitely empathizes with the suffering involved, but he has enough faith in cosmic process not to be overwhelmed by this. He can see in a very astute way that Babur is a better ruler in his own country than the current rulers in North India are in theirs, so there is the possibility of a positive outcome. In the meantime, he responds

very pro-actively on a "micropolitical" level: he sets up the community in Kartarpur, where there is a mixture of intense spiritual discipline and concrete everyday agricultural and economic activity⁵⁰. This is very much the mixture that one finds in the metaphoric passages that the author has been discussing. Their integration of work and devotional activity also makes one think of two key concepts in Sikh ethics: *kirat karo* (earning an honest living) and *gristi* (the life of a householder), both of which bring the spiritual and everyday life together in a very profound and coherent way, while rejecting the Hindu religious ideal of a *sannyasi* or *jogi*, a wandering ascetic, who practices sexual abstinence and lives on other people's alms⁵¹. However, it is possible to assimilate this aspect of Sikhism to a kind of Victorian bourgeois morality, particularly because of the complex relationship between Sikh identity and the adaptation to Britishness as a sort of universal model for mankind after the fall of the Panjab in 1849⁵². What is at issue here however is not so much the history of the colonial period as a philosophic problem: Victorian bourgeois morality usually borders on a watered down idealism. At best, if sincerely held, it is rather limited in what it

aspires to, and at worst ideals can be merged into smug self-interest, or all ideals can be debunked in a levelling process that again promotes self-interest. It lacks the beauty and intensity of Sikh immanentist metaphysics, which link matter and spirit in such a rich and complex way, something Sikh social, economic and family values also do, but they can lose this quality if they become separated from this metaphysics.

Of course, the idea of Guru Nanak's teaching having three main pillars - *naam japo*, *kirat karo* and *vand chhako* (sharing with the community) - should ensure a close connection is maintained between the different sides of Sikhism, but it has already been seen that the socially committed dimension of Guru Nanak's thought has been underestimated. A major difficulty is that it is easy to list the three pillars, but it is much harder to communicate how they interact, how much greater the whole is than the sum of the parts in this instance⁵³. Perhaps the fundamental problem is that the modern Western division between private religion and a secular public sphere only suits Sikh thought in a very superficial way because it impedes the multiple and interconnected spiritual and life-producing flows

that are essential to it. *Anand karaj*⁵⁴ (the marriage ceremony) and *grist marg* (the path of the householder) inextricably mingle devout rapture, biological continuance and quietly affectionate partnership. They do so, however, because the entire Sikh universe is pervaded by Waheguru, and they reflect that: the *gristi* ethic is as logically connected with the quasi-pantheistic immanentism of the *SGGS*, as the *sannyasi* one is with earlier Hindu idealism. *Naam japo* may yield esoteric insights about the nature of God, the self and the universe, but the latter is an animate materialist one, so it does not exclude everyday human activity, such as *kirat karo* and *vand chhako*, whose closely interrelated ethical productivity and social altruism are completely at one with a universe where everything is connected, and man has a proactive relationship with God's nurturing *hukam*. There is a remarkably coherent and holistic vision here.

Deleuze and Guattari's Desiring Machines and Sikhism

It is now time to return to the first three sections of the opening chapter on *machines désirantes* (desiring machines) in *Anti-Oedipus* by Deleuze and Guattari⁵⁵. As has already been said, these three sections employ the same taxonomy of syntheses that was used in the seventh series of *Logic of Sense*⁵⁶, except that the order has changed slightly. Connection is still first, but disjunction is now second and conjunction third. The difference is not that significant: both progressions move towards complicated, more open-ended syntheses which do not prevent their constituent elements from continuing to interact in a way that is not true of the synthesis in the Hegelian dialectic, which tends to cancel out the thesis and anti-thesis that produced it⁵⁷. Rather more important are the differing natures of the two books in which this taxonomy of syntheses appears. Three quite distinctive facets of the same underlying philosophy are to be found in *Logic of Sense* (1969), *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and the very slightly earlier *Difference and Repetition* (1968). There was a real intensity to the development of French thought in this period, one of the great moments in

Western philosophy, with the interaction of a whole series of seminal texts by major figures producing very rapid advances in ideas⁵⁸. One could say that a whole history of certain Western ways of thinking was being challenged at a very deep philosophical level. There is not the time in this article to examine in detail the fertile complementarity that can result from putting together Sikh thought and this intensely self-critical French philosophic moment, but a few important points can be made. Firstly, Sikhism managed to develop "Enlightenment values" without actually owing very much to the West, so it avoided the attendant modernism and its contradictions that is bound up with the Western Enlightenment and which postmodernism is trying to deal with. Secondly, to be radical, this French critique of modernism needed to be rigorously philosophical, but this meant it was very abstract and technical, and it can be difficult to understand fully what its practical applications might be. Sikhism has a real intuitive affinity with modern French philosophy and provides a living alternative to what that philosophy is criticizing. This means it can give immense insight in relation to certain problems, such as the philosophy of the

event. Deleuzians such as Massumi have recourse to dangerous "flight or fight" situations to explore the event⁵⁹, that is moments of crisis when the evental structure of the universe rips through into a consciousness that is normally immune to it. Sikh metaphysics mean that *naamsimran* is a way of maintaining a quiet but continuous and profound contact with this evental structure, which is very close indeed to what Sikhs call Waheguru⁶⁰.

Difference and Repetition is a magisterial work of technical philosophy, setting out a radical ontology of pure difference in great detail. There are many close parallels with Sikh thought, but there is the same problem that there is with Spinoza's *Ethics*: Sikhism philosophizes in an intuitive way that is very coherent but not technical in the same way as Spinoza or Deleuze are. Satnam Kaur and S. K. Saxena have demonstrated this coherence admirably, even if Sikh thought has rather more Deleuzian asymmetry, disjunction and paradox than their kind of coherence allows for. There have not been many references to *Difference and Repetition* in this article because it is not easy to match up intuitive and technical philosophy. That does not mean

it should not be done: bridging this gap is part of what modern French philosophy is about. *Logic of Sense* can be just as technical and philosophic, but it deals with the philosophy of the event and the problems of language and meaning associated with it.

¹ The author would like to thank the two "spiritual fathers" of this article, Gurinder Singh Mann and James Williams, the former for having encouraged her so much in the writing of it, the latter for having read an earlier version so attentively and coming up with a host of immensely valuable suggestions. Charlie Gere, Peter Mack, Elizabeth McGrath, Christopher Norris, Kaveri Qureshi and Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh also looked at earlier versions and made perceptive comments.

² For the bhakti movement as part of an Indian Renaissance comparable to the Western one and equally leading to modernity, see J. S. Hawley, *Three Bhakti Voices*, pb ed., (New Dehli: OUP, 2012), p. ix. J. S. Hawley, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015) is a more recent book by this talented and extremely productive scholar, whose works give a richly detailed picture of the overall Indian devotional context within which Sikhism emerged. See also Soûr-Dâs, *Pastorales*, C. Vaudeville (trans., introduction and notes), (Paris: Gallimard/Unesco, 1971), pp. 11-28 and K. Sharma, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A New Perspective*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987). The latter work is not as well known in the West as it should be: it is remarkably well researched and argued. One of its main claims is that the Western scholars who initiated the modern academic study of bhakti projected their own Western notions of the relationship between philosophy and religion on to the Indian material, which has meant that all subsequent work has in a certain sense been based on a falsifying perspective. It will become

clear that the present author very much agrees with Sharma's ideas on the different relationship between religion and philosophy in India and the West. Bimal Krishna Matilal produced some seminal books on classical Indian epistemology, logic, perception and the philosophy of language in the 1970s and 80s, showing how they could still be of real relevance to the work of modern Western analytic philosophers. One should also mention Rajendra Prasad, an analytic-trained Indian philosopher who also wrote some very densely argued essays on quite a number of concepts in classical Indian ethics. See R. Prasad, *Karma, Causation and Retributive Morality: Conceptual Essays in Ethics and Metaethics*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1989) and R. Prasad, *Varnadharma, Niskama Karma and Practical Morality: A Critical Essay on Applied Ethics*, (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 1999).

³ The famous mind-body problem in Western philosophy only contains two elements: the mind and body, while Indian philosophy adds a third: the soul. This becomes even more complicated because the soul is part of the world soul. It is separated from it as it undergoes reincarnation from one earthly being to another, but it can achieve liberation (*moksa*) from rebirth and rejoin it. Sikhism brings a very important new dimension to previous Indian philosophy, which tends to regard the world (*maya*) as wholly false and not at all divine. In Sikhism, God creates the world out of herself/himself and totally pervades it. Although God is still only purely divine as *nirankar* (the Formless One), she/he is also present in a more adulterated way in her/his creation. This gives the possibility of the soul (*jiva* or *atma*) having a kind of connection through the senses with the world soul (*paramatma*) in the physical reality

that surrounds the body in which it finds itself. One starts to think of Heidegger's attempt to overcome what he called the cabinet of Cartesian consciousness by eliminating the strict division between the self's interiority and its external relationship with the world outside it. Clearly the Sikh and Heideggerian arguments come out of rather different perspectives, but one feels a definite affinity in the underlying problem they are trying to get hold of. Speculative comparative philosophy can bring real depth to one's understanding of what these underlying philosophic problems are about. J. Stambaugh, *The Formless Self*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), which moves between Zen thinkers and Western philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, is a superb example of this.

⁴ One has to distinguish between the Eastern and Western Churches here. Neoplatonism very much predominates in the former, with key early figures such as Gregory of Nyssa and the Pseudo-Dionysius being deeply influenced by it, while in the latter Aquinas uses Aristotle to produce the synthesis that continues to be the basis of at least Catholic theology. The situation in the West is complicated by Augustine, who was also strongly influenced by Neoplatonism, but he avoided certain aspects of it, in particular the notion of lesser beings as emanations from an ultimate first principle: his God was the much more personal one of the "Old Testamanent". Augustine was important for Protestantism and philosophers such as Descartes and Malebranche. John Scottus Eriugena is an extremely interesting ninth century figure in the West who took many of his ideas from Gregory of Nyssa and the Pseudo-Dionysius.

⁵ Both have non-personalized Gods that are immanent to (that is present within) the universes they create. However, the two immanentist metaphysical systems come out of quite different contexts, so they vary in the details of how they are constructed. The Stoics essentially took the more Socratic aspects of Plato's *Timaeus* - above all its idea of an immanent world soul, which they called *theos* (god) or *logos* - while rejecting its Platonic transcendental (that is separate from and "above" the created world) elements. They eliminated the transcendental elements by positing a kind of materialism. The whole universe was made up of nothing but corporeals, but by corporeal they meant something which could act or be acted upon, so the soul would be a corporeal, as would also be the Sikh God, as she/he evidently acts. Nevertheless, their actual cosmogony becomes very physical, at times using downright sexual imagery, with *theos* or *logos* becoming *pneuma*, a combination of fire and air, one of two *archai* (principles), an active one that is added to a passive one, *hule* (matter). Sikhism draws on the the rich discourse of *nirguna* (without qualities) and *saguna* (with qualities), with which the devotee characterizes God within bhakti spirituality. This means it can come up with a God that is immanent to the universe she/he creates out of herself/himself, but simultaneously not subject to form (that is space) or time, without though becoming transcendental to that universe, a God whose infinite attributes are contained within her/his state of no attributes, but that state is equally contained within the whole infinity of her/his attributes. One should not underestimate the philosophical sophistication of this conception of God, which can even remind one of Kant's antinomies. (The author owes this suggestion to

James Williams). For the moment, the comparison with Stoic cosmology is illuminating. The Greek tendency to "stop" at a primary substance, something the human mind can comprehend, contrasts with the Sikh desire to suggest an even more fundamental dynamic creative entity quite beyond rational understanding, an approach that might well find favour with some modern cosmologists. Again, speculative comparative philosophy deepens one's grasp of the problems inherent to an immanentist metaphysics and highlights how impressive the Sikh solution is. One should add that Stoicism was very important in a number of ways for Deleuze.

⁶Carvaka or Loyakata is an Indian school of philosophy that was atheistic, materialist and skeptic. Its beliefs can be found in the later sections of the *Rigveda*, and it had an important influence on other schools of Indian philosophy during the classical period, bringing a rational dimension to them. It was usually regarded as heterodox. The most recent study is: P. P. Gokhale, *Lokayata/Carvaka: A Philosophical Enquiry*, (New Delhi: OUP, 2015).

⁷See D. S. Clarke, *Philosophy's Second Revolution*, (Chicago/La Salle: Open Court, 1997) for materialist metaphysics and normative ethics in analytic philosophy.

⁸ This is a very complex problem. However admirable Western bourgeois Enlightenment liberalism may be in certain ways, it is also contaminated by the notion of the West as superior because of its singular capacity for progress and a mechanism by which the benefactor gains moral status from helping victims, but it also requires them to remain victims for that moral status to continue. Nietzsche's astonishingly perceptive

psychological insights are essential for bringing this mechanism to light, and the author has benefited from a fruitful exchange with Keith Ansell-Pearson, an excellent Nietzschean, on this subject. Postmodernism is also essential, here, but only when it is used to explore the profound contradictions in modernism, as Lyotard does, and not in a simplistic and triumphalist way to designate a further moment in Western "progress" that supersedes it. James Williams' work on Lyotard is very valuable in this respect. One can start with his chapter "Jean-François Lyotard" in A. Schrift (ed.), *History of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 6, (London: Acumen, 2010), pp. 133-51. The contradictions of the Western Enlightenment mean that it cannot be used as a measuring stick for other enlightenments, such as the Sikh one, which have their own possibilities and contradictions. On a somewhat different note, Ansell-Pearson is currently producing some superb work on the care of the self in middle period Nietzsche and late Foucault. See in particular, K. Ansell-Pearson, "Care of Self in *Dawn*: On Nietzsche's Resistance to Bio-political Modernity" in M. Knoll and B. Stoker (eds.), *Nietzsche as Political Philosopher*, (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), pp. 269-87. Sikhism is in fact remarkably perceptive from a psychological point of view, and comparisons with this side of Foucault and Nietzsche can be immensely illuminating in both directions. For Foucault, one can begin with M. Foucault, *The Care of the Self: History of Sexuality 3*, R. Hurley (trans.), (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986). The French original - Foucault expresses himself so powerfully in his actual French - is M. Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité 3: Le Souci de soi*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984). One can then move on to the relevant Collège de France lectures.

⁹ This use of sensible and intelligible is obviously a technical philosophic one, mainly employed in the West and above all associated with Neoplatonism. On the surface, it does seem somewhat different from everyday usage, but if one thinks about it, sensible can mean something like "down to earth", and intelligible is closely linked to mental understanding. Obviously, Indian philosophy does not use these precise terms, but it has ones which relate to the same sort of underlying philosophic approach to reality.

¹⁰ "gagan mai thaal rav chand deepak banay taarikaa mandal janak motee" *SGGS*, page 13.

¹¹ The Sikh God is described as *nirbhau* (fearless) and *nirvair* (without hatred) in the *Mul Mantra*. She/he is not like the jealous, wrathful or vengeful God of the "Old Testament". This means that she/he does not have the terrifying aspect of majesty that one associates with Yahweh/ Jehovah, who punishes in a very angry and frightening way. Fear of God does come into the *SGGS*, but it is an almost shy fear of a very loving God.

¹² "laal ratee sach bhai vasee bhaa-ay ratee rang raas" *SGGS*, page 54.

¹³ See C. Vaudeville, *Barahmasa in Indian Literatures*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

¹⁴ For the Mira poem and the *SGGS*, see G. S. Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture*, (New York: OUP, 2001), pp. 114-17 for exemplary scholarship and J. S. Hawley, *op. cit.*, (New Delhi: OUP, 2012), pp. 103-5 for a refined critical sensibility. The poem is also the starting point for the very rich seventh chapter of Hawley's book: "Krishna and the Gender of Longing", pp. 165-

78, which contrasts the nature of the female voice in the poetry of Mira (a woman) and Surdas (a man). Its construction of gender is very binary and asymmetrical in its power relations, and it is also loosely Freudian, which may well suit its material. Given Sikhism's rather different attitude to gender equality and the Deleuzian approach to its ontology adopted in this article, the concept of *devenir femme* (becoming woman) in Deleuze and Guattari might be more appropriate to the *SGGS*. See G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, B. Massumi (trans.), (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), chapter 10, in particular pp. 321-5. The French reference is G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*, (Paris: Minuit, 1980), chapter 10, in particular, pp. 337-42. One should add a quick word about English translations of Deleuze (or Deleuze and Guattari): the translations of each work are always the same, but they are all to be found in a number of different editions by different American or British publishers. This means the numbering of the pages can vary. References in this article are always to the most recent Bloomsbury editions.

¹⁵ The whole of Deleuze's philosophy is arguably an ontology of difference and becoming, but the most extended and technical treatment of it is in one of his two major solo works: *Difference and Repetition*. His other major solo work is actually called *Logic of Sense*. The early series in the latter that discuss the effects of surface, the proposition, sense and putting things into series are the most relevant here. See G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, P. Patton (trans.), (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2014) and G. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, C. V. Boundas, M. Lester and C. J. Stivale (trans.), (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015). The French references are: G. Deleuze, *Différence et*

répétition, (Paris: PUF, 1968) and G. Deleuze, *Logique du sens*, (Paris: Minuit, 1969). Deleuze's two books on cinema, often mistakenly treated as if they were film theory, are in fact two brilliant philosophical works exploring the Bergsonian side of his philosophy and showing that an art form can do philosophy within the means available to it, rather than just represent philosophic ideas. See G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (trans.), (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013) and G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta (trans.), (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013). The French references are G. Deleuze, *Cinéma 1: L'Image-mouvement*, (Paris: Minuit, 1983) and G. Deleuze, *Cinéma 2: L'Image-temps*, (Paris: Minuit, 1985). Films can be character-based and use actors trained for the stage, as in *Citizen Kane*, even if there is a complex narrative structure and avant-garde camera work, or they can be pure animate visual fields with a quite different kind of performance and a relative lack of clear and sustained story-telling, as in the work of Paradjanov. One can however make a philosophic distinction here as well as an aesthetic one. Doing or talking about philosophy within an art form can also be a way of fusing ideas with matter in an immanentist way. On a slightly different note, Deleuze's immanentism owes a great deal to Spinoza: a comparison of the latter's very subtle pantheism with that of Sikhism - both of them have an immanent God - could be extremely illuminating, not so much because of the innumerable parallels, but because of their very different approaches. Apart from the *Mul Mantra*, which has a very real logical coherence, Sikhism tends to indicate a spirital process which grasps the ineffable in an assured but distinctly visionary

or esoteric way. Spinoza is obsessive in the way in which he establishes propositions that he has freed from all internal contradiction, from which he logically deduces his entire system. This makes for a difference in how concepts are understood, such as God's will, for example: *hukam* in Sikhism and *voluntas* in Spinoza. Neither see God's will as like the human will, but this is not argued in an extended way in the *SGGS*, but it becomes clear from putting together what is said about God and meditating deeply on it. Spinoza discusses *voluntas* in detail Propositions XXXII and XXXIII of Book I of the *Ethics*, making a distinction between finite and infinite will: the latter is God's. Both are necessary and not free, but for different reasons: finite will is caused by something else, which in its turn is caused by something else, and on to infinity, while God's will is necessitated by his nature which is singular as he is the only God there can be. This argument is not at all incompatible with Sikhism, but the *SGGS* would never present it in this way. That does not mean it does not search for and achieve the same kind of coherence that is to be found in Spinoza, nor that it is not important to "feel" the resonance of the *Ethics* as well as follow its logic. For Spinoza's text in English, see B. De Spinoza, *Ethics*, E. Curley (ed. and trans.), S. Hampshire (introduction), (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 21-5. For the Latin text, see Spinoza, *Ethique*, B. Pautrat (presented and trans.), new ed., (Paris: Seuil, 2010), pp. 70-81.

¹⁶ J. Singh, *Helium*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 126-7.

¹⁷ The reference to the first series of Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* is deliberate. See G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (London/New York:

Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 1-3 and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 9-12.

¹⁸ See G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 316-19 and 389-91 and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (Paris: PUF, 1968), pp. 311-14 and 381-4.

¹⁹ See G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 39-44 and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 50-6

²⁰ See J. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 7 and 283-4.

²¹ Not that it has to be. A point is being made: this is not a "search for purity".

²² See G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 131-7 and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 152-8.

²³ See for example G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 150-5 and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 171-7. The philosophy of the event in Deleuze is closely connected with the ontology of difference and becoming which has been discussed above: it is arguably what *Logic of Sense* is about. Broadly all passage of time is structured in an evental way, but this is only fully revealed at certain moments of peak intensity, such as when transformational concepts such as that of Harmandar emerge or someone rises to a crisis with full commitment, if not sacrifice, as in the case of Guru Arjan Dev. James Williams writes beautifully on Deleuze and time: see especially J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

²⁴ Whitehead, a major influence on Deleuze, is also known as a process philosopher. William James is another important influence on Deleuze's attitude to truth. James' interest in Vivekananda and Vedanta is well known. See the references to them in W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (New York: Viking Penguin, 1982), pp. 400, 419, 513 and 522. However, James was very much opposed to all types of idealism, intellectualism and monism. See W. James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996) and W. James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). The latter was published posthumously and shows James taking his work into fascinating new territory. The compelling Jamesian blend of faith, openness and plurality could be of genuine relevance to the study of Sikh thought, in particular its capacity for creativity and resilience.

²⁵ S. Kaur and S. K. Saxena, *Guru Nanak's Japuji: A Look Anew*, (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2013).

²⁶ S. Kaur, *Three Basics of Sikh Religious Thought: Faith, Grace and Prayer*, (Delhi: Pragati Publications, 1997).

²⁷ Clearly philology is essential, but it needs to be used in relation to a broader sense of the coherence of the overall context. For example, it is not enough to identify *saram* in *saram khand* as coming from Sanskrit and meaning "effort", or from Persian and meaning "modesty", and then slightly force the rest of the passage to conform to that choice, especially since the language of the *SGGS* can be very complex in its polyglossia and often subtly meaningful ambiguity. A good example of how one can go beyond simple philology is to be found in Avtar Singh's interpretation of *saram khand*: see A.

Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs*, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1996), pp. 233-5.

²⁸ Croce saw himself as an immanentist, avoiding both transcendentalism and sensationalism, the latter deriving from Hume. Intuition and the aesthetic is the basis of all mental activity for him. Langer was strongly influenced by Whitehead and Cassirer and distinguishes between discursive and presentational symbols. The latter are the ones used in the arts or in rituals. Dewey is a very wide-ranging and significant philosopher who produced very substantial work on epistemology and logic in general, but he did write an important book on aesthetics: *Art and Experience*.

²⁹ This is not unrelated to what Langer meant when she distinguished between discursive and presentational symbols.

³⁰ There is not time to discuss the richness of negative or apophatic theology here, but it is rarely linked to any sort of pantheism and is often connected to a transcendental God. It can also be approached in a rather sloppy way, something that definitely does not apply to Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion's writings devoted to it, often in a rich dialogue with each other. "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" ("Comment ne pas parler: Dénégations") is the key text by Derrida on this subject. In it, he is mainly concerned to distinguish between negative theology, which he sees as still being associated with a metaphysics of presence, and his own notion of deconstruction, which was meant to deal with that very problem in Western metaphysics, which was first addressed by Heidegger. A metaphysics of presence is directed at a something, and this is true of negative theology, even if that something is a hyperessence beyond any

ordinary essence or existence. It also still employs a discourse that uses propositions, even if those propositions are posed in the negative, and there is some kind of intuitive union with the something at the end of the process. This has nothing to do with Derridean deconstruction and the terms it uses, such as *différance* (a neologism combining the meanings of "to differ" and "to defer", which are both *différer* in French) and *trace* (same word in English). Both of these terms do not exactly refer to a something, as they can never exist in the present, but they are not nothing, as Derrida is not a nihilist. What they refer to is a necessary condition for the production of meaning, but it is separate from the present moment of meaning, both in space ("to differ") and time ("to defer"), as a has to have been in a dimly remembered past or a will have to have been in the whole of the future. What one needs to get hold of is that Derrida is trying to address the unanchored and unravelling quality of all meaning, not simply Wittgenstein's silence in front of something about which one cannot speak. See J. Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume 2*, P. Kamuf and E. Rottenberg (eds.), (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 143-95. The French reference is J. Derrida, *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre II*, (Paris: Galilée, 1987-2003), pp. 145-200. Derrida was always very diffident about the interest shown in him by theologians, but Marion is as much a theologian as a philosopher, drawing on Gregory of Nyssa and the Pseudo-Dionysius as well as Husserl and Heidegger. He has also worked extensively on Descartes' metaphysics, which makes him particularly interesting. Two books to start with which show his subtle approach to negative theology are: J.-L. Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, T. A. Carlson (trans.), (New York:

Fordham University Press, 2001) and J.-L. Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, T. A. Carlson, 2nd ed., (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2012). The French references are: J.-L. Marion, *L'idole et la distance: Cinq études*, (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 1977) and J.-L. Marion, *Dieu sans l'être*, (Paris: PUF, 1991). One should mention that "Dieu sans l'être" can mean God without being it, that is without being God, as well as God without being, that is not being a being. Derrida and Marion belong to a rather different strand of modern French philosophy than the one explored in this article, but they could well contribute to a much deeper understanding of the Sikh God as simultaneously *nirankar* and pervading everywhere in the universe.

³¹ It should be pointed out that the very clear understanding of the difference between a substance and its attributes that informs chapters two and three very much comes from a certain type of philosophical training. One also senses an awareness of the correspondence and coherence theories of truth, which number among the several theories of truth to be found in modern Western analytic philosophy, although one can find their roots in earlier philosophers. Broadly, a proposition is true in the correspondence theory if what it says corresponds to what an object or fact actually is, whereas the coherence theory establishes the truth of a proposition in relation to other propositions, with which it forms a coherent set. Two simple examples: *x* is a bachelor is true if the man *x* is actually a bachelor, while *x* is a bachelor is not true if one also says that *x* is married (or vice versa). Of course, it gets much more complicated than this: the coherence theory of truth is particularly good for logical entailment in belief systems. See F.

H. Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914) for a classic work on this area by a major philosopher. The actual names of the two theories of truth as such did not exist in classical Indian philosophy, but the underlying notions behind them did. See S. C. Chatterjee, *Nyaya Theory of Knowledge*, (Delhi: BharatiyaKala Prakashan, 2008).

³² The old spellings are *sati* and *naamu*. The *aumkar* ending of *naamu* is a nominative one for a type of regular masculine noun, while the *sihari* ending of *sati* is an unusual ending that does not follow a normal pattern, but it is still one for a noun. See H. Singh, J. Singh and S. P. Singh, *Guru Granth Sahib: Its Language & Grammar*, (USA: Sikh Research Institute, 2014), pp. 38-9 and 59.

³³ See the excellent chapter "Sikhs and Organization" in T. Singh, *Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions*, new and revised ed., (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1951), pp. 36-55. Teja Singh was an important Sikh intellectual.

³⁴ See J. S. Grewal, *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order: From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, revised and enlarged ed., (New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), in particular pp. 11-12 and 30-46. In the first of these references, Grewal says: "The essay on Barbarbani [the second reference is to this essay] reveals that Guru Nanak's concerns were not only religious and ethical but also political. This aspect of his concerns is generally ignored, resulting in a misunderstanding of his basic position, and that of his successors." See also J. S. Grewal, *Recent Debates in Sikh Studies: An Assessment*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2011), especially pp. 67-71. Grewal is a quite remarkable scholar: he manages to be utterly fair in his assessment of the different sides in the

often very intense conflicts of opinion in Sikh studies and then comes up with a beautifully lucid and perceptive interpretation of his own. For Mira Bai and Kabir, see J. S. Hawley, *op. cit.*, (New Delhi, OUP, 2012), P. Mukta, *Upholding the Common Life: The Community of Mira Bai*, (Delhi: OUP, 1997) and M. Horstmann (ed.), *Images of Kabir*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002). For Namdev, see C. L. Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Foucault wrote a very famous essay on Nietzsche, genealogy and history in which he explored Nietzsche's idea of genealogy or *wirchliche Historie* (the latter is normally translated as historical "sense" or "spirit", but it literally means "real history"). It is opposed to a historical approach that imposes a suprahistorical rigidified identity, either an essentialist one of origins or a kind of teleological one resulting from a necessary (not contingent) historical process. Nietzsche or Foucault's genealogy or *wirchliche Historie* means that there is not some basic continuous core entity enduring throughout the history of something. Every moment of that history is open to a much richer, less predictable, totality of change, and past moments are never annihilated in a tyranny of a present which could never have been anything else. One sees a non-linear progression of a bundle of concurrent identities, therefore providing a much more variegated reservoir of possibilities to draw on for the present and future. Foucault is actually very close to Deleuze's philosophy of the event here. See "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 76-100. The original French essay - "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire" - was

published in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, (Paris: PUF, 1971), pp. 145-72, but it is much easier to find on line. Foucault is particularly good at communicating the resonances of Nietzsche's German terms. This is a genuinely novel conception of how history "really" happens and how it should be grasped. Deleuze was also very strongly influenced by Nietzsche.

³⁵ See A. K. Ramanujan (introduction and trans.), *Speaking of Siva*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 34-5. See also V. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995). Turner's seminal work was first published in 1969. Chapter four discusses what Turner calls "communitas" in relation to St. Francis, Caitanya and the religious movements they founded. Turner is not as "fashionable" as he was, but he is still well worth reading, even if the generalizations of *The Ritual Process* sometimes skate over cultural specificities.

³⁶ This analysis is broadly Nietzschean. Of course, Sikhs are not immune to what is happening here, as they are part of this world and operate within it. .

³⁷ Of course, this does not mean that Western liberalism does not have its strengths or should be abolished wholesale. Nevertheless, one must remember that Thomas Jefferson basically perceived democracy as protecting man's better self from his worse self. That is a very pragmatic but rather limited notion of what a society can be.

³⁸ See G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 97-9 and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 115-6. See also A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, volume 1, (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), pp. 164-5, 333-4 and 340.

³⁹"*Le sens de la vie*" is "the meaning of life", while "*rue à sens unique*" means "one way street".

⁴⁰ It was also of course used in a slightly different way to describe the effect of Satnam Kaur and Saxena's analysis of the attributes in *Mul Mantra*.

⁴¹ See G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 45-50 and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, (Paris: Minuit, 1969), pp. 57-62. See also G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 11-34. The French reference is G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe*, new enlarged ed., (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 7-29. The French edition is called "enlarged" because an article published by the two authors in 1973 was subsequently added to the 1972 text as an appendix (pp. 463-87).

⁴² There is good article by an excellent Deleuzian on the relationship between *Logic of Sense* and *Anti-Oedipus*: see D. W. Smith, "From the Surface to the Depths: On the Transition from *Logic of Sense* to *Anti-Oedipus*" in C. V. Boundas (ed.), *Gilles Deleuze: The Intensive Reduction*, (London/New York: Continuum, 2009), pp. 82-97. Guattari also wrote important philosophic books in his own right. F. Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*, T. Adkins (trans.), (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011) develops the material which was in *Anti-Oedipus* and looks forward to *A Thousand Plateaus*, another joint work written with Deleuze. The French reference is F. Guattari, *L'Inconscient machinique: Essais de schizo-analyse*, (Paris: Recherches, 1979). It is worth noting that the adjective *machinique* (machinic in translation) is used by Deleuze and Guattari rather than *machinal* or *mécanique*.

Machinique is a relatively uncommon word, except in relation to avant-garde aesthetics, which refers more to machines as a type of process rather than to their specifically mechanical qualities. *Mécanique* would refer to the latter and is also used for the branch of physics known in English as mechanics. *Machinal* is automatic or unconscious: *un geste machinal* is an automatic or unconscious gesture. The choice of *machinique* indicates that Deleuze and Guattari are talking about the body and the unconscious which is immanent to it in a way that treats them fully as a kind of machine, not simply using the term as a metaphor, but also not being reductive or purely mechanistic. *Anti-Oedipus* will eventually discuss subversive avant-garde artistic or literary machines in the appendix, while *A Thousand Plateaus* will devote an entire chapter (twelve) to the war machine (*machine de guerre*), but these machines all go back to the discussion of the body and the unconscious at the beginning of *Anti-Oedipus*. One should add that philosophy, psychoanalysis and a certain kind of left-wing politics very much came together in France in the late sixties and seventies. See S. Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud's French Revolution*, (London: Burnett Books/André Deutsch, 1979).

⁴³ Lewis Carroll was a distinguished mathematician and logician: he taught at Christ Church, Oxford for just over twenty-five years. His famous books are full of playful but complex mathematical, logical and linguistic puzzles. Deleuze mines them for profound philosophical insights. Carroll's psychological peculiarities - his stammer and somewhat perverse interest in young girls - are also explored in *Logic of Sense*.

⁴⁴ All the passages are from hymns by Guru Nanak. The Khalsa Consensus translation has been used. The original texts and references will be given later in the article.

⁴⁵ *SGGS*, page 23

⁴⁶ *SGGS*, page 24

⁴⁷ There is polyglossia here: *salil* is Sanskrit, *aab* Persian and *paanee* Panjabi. Elsewhere, *karmaa* and *amal* are both Arabic. See the relevant entries in S. S. Kohli, *Dictionary of Guru Granth Sahib*, (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1996), an indispensable book for dealing with the language of the *SGGS*.

⁴⁸ The text in the original language is: "man taaraajee chit tulaa tayree sayv saraaf kamaavaa/ghat hee bheetar so saho tolee in bidh chit rahaavaa/aapay kanda tol taraajee aapay tolanhaaraa/aapay daykhai aapay boojhai aapay hai anjaaraa" *SGGS*, page 731.

⁴⁹ See for example B. Massumi, *The Power at the End of the Economy*, (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2015). For a review of this book, see N. Kaur, "A Snow Scene and its Plastic Flakes", *Economic & Political Weekly*, (Vol LI, No 4, January 23, 2016), pp. 26-8.

⁵⁰ This analysis owes a great deal to a passage in an as yet unpublished article on the relationship between Sikhism and the bhakti movement by Gurinder Singh Mann. There is also a particularly beautiful section on the interplay between *Hari* (the name of God) and *hari* (green or fresh) in the *SGGS*. This kind of work on the poetics of the *SGGS* is essential, as it does not dress up literal ideas in pretty images, but actually produces very complex ideas via poetic process. See also J. S. Grewal, *op. cit.*,

(New Delhi: Manohar, 2007), *loc. cit.* and J. S. Grewal, *op. cit.*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2011), *loc. cit.* for Guru Nanak's attitude to Barbur's invasions. W. H. McLeod did see the subtle mixture of the devotional and practical at Kartarpur, but he did not see that it might have had a "micropolitical" dimension: see W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford India Paperbacks ed., (Delhi: OUP, 1996), pp. 230-2.

⁵¹ It is worth remembering that Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's son, who was the founder of the Udasis, was a traditional Indian ascetic. Both he and the order he founded did have a fruitful relationship with some of the early Gurus. See *Seminar Papers on Baba Sri Chand Ji*, (New Delhi: Gobind Sadan, 1994).

⁵² A facile point is not being made about whether or not Sikhs "sold out" to the Raj. Up to a point, an element of this was inevitable, given the economic and political circumstances, and the colonial administration may well have done some genuine good in the Panjab, albeit mainly in its own interest. It is more the fact that one ethnic group with its own specific characteristics - the British - became a universal model of what any group of people should be. Fruitful interaction between different groups of people is of course very valuable, and a search for "authenticity" can be limiting, but the interchange is distorted if the ethnic specificity of one group is regarded as a model for other groups. This of course is one of the motivations for postmodernism. The impact of the colonial context on Sikhism is quite subtle. For example, the *SGGS* has mostly been translated into English for perfectly good reasons, but the way in which British poetic idiom developed in the late nineteenth century may not have made it particularly suitable for dealing with the language of the *SGGS*, which sometimes makes one

think of nineteenth century French poets, such as Nerval or Mallarmé. For a superb work by an important philosopher on the transformation of French poetic idiom in the work of such poets, see J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, M. Waller (trans.), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). Actually, only about a third of the original has been translated in this publication, so it is definitely worth going back to the French text: J. Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique: L'Avant-garde à la fin du xixe siècle: Lautréamont et Mallarmé*, (Paris: Seuil, 1974). Poets such as Mallarmé are absolutely central to the emergence of modern French philosophy. See also J.-P. Sartre, *Mallarmé or the Poet of Nothingness*, E. Sturm (trans.), (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991). The French reference is J.-P. Sartre, *Mallarmé: La Lucidité et sa face d'ombre*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1986). For Puran Singh's famous exploration of a proto-modernist English-language poet who was not British, see P. Singh, *Walt Whitman and the Sikh Inspiration*, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1982). The point is not that Sikhism is more "French" or "American" than "British", but that it can explore different sides of its nature in relation to a whole variety of cultures.

⁵³ An example of this inability to convey Sikh thought as being much greater than the sum of its parts is L. Lahori, *The Concept of Man in Sikhism*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001). In spite of being very intelligent and scholarly and giving equal weight to its metaphysics and to its social dimension, the overall coherence of the different elements in Sikhism does not really come through.

⁵⁴ See T. Singh, *op. cit.* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1951), pp. 107-9. Two lines from Guru Amar Das which are used in *anand karaj*: "They are not said to be husband and wife, who merely sit together. They alone are called husband and wife, who have one light in two bodies." ("dhan pir ayhi na aakhee-an bahan ikthay ho-ay/ayk jot du-ay moortee dhan kahee-ai so-ay"). One should point out that since Waheguru pervades everything, this is not just the union of two souls from two bodies, it is the physical and spiritual fusion of two portions of God, which is why there a subtly interdependent relationship between Sikh marriage and metaphysics.

⁵⁵ See G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), *loc. cit.* And G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, (Paris: Minuit, 1972), *loc. cit.*

⁵⁶ See G. Deleuze, *op. cit.* (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), *loc. cit.* and G. Deleuze, *op. cit.* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), *loc. cit.*

⁵⁷ Wrestling with this kind of problem in the Hegelian dialectic is absolutely central to the work of philosophers such as Deleuze, Lyotard and Derrida. Foucault's Nietzschean approach to history which was discussed in note 34 is also broadly anti-Hegelian. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were the major critics of Hegel's dialectic in the nineteenth century. Marx of course uses the same dialectic as Hegel, but he is a materialist rather than idealist. For a classic book in English on the "French Hegel" by an important philosopher, see J. Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth- Century France*, reprint ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). See also J. Lèbre, *Hegel à l'épreuve de la philosophie contemporaine: Deleuze, Lyotard, Derrida*, (Paris: Ellipses, 2002) for a short, reasonably

manageable work in French. Jean Hyppolite was a post-war philosopher whose work on Hegel was very important for the next generation of philosophers in France: see in particular J. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, L. Lawlor and A. Sen (trans.), (Albany: SUNY, 1997). The French reference is: J. Hyppolite, *Logique et existence: Essai sur la logique de Hegel*, (Paris: PUF, 1952). Deleuze reviewed this book, and it was a key influence on *Logic of Sense*, where paradox is very much preferred to contradiction and is the model for the relationship between sense and non-sense. These problems have a real relevance for Sikh thought, which manages to be very much itself, while continuing to maintain a dialogue with the groups from which it emerged, even if it may at times dismiss them all as being too concerned with ritual or superstition, for example. The problem with the now out-of-date idea that Sikhism was an amalgam of Hinduism and Islam was not the fact that there was no Muslim, especially Sufi, influence on Sikh thought but that the historical pattern was too rigid and "Hegelian": Hindu thesis, Muslim antithesis, Sikh synthesis. The ambiguity of the famous phrase attributed to Guru Nanak that there were neither Hindus nor Muslims - "naa ko hindu hai naa ko musalamaan hai" - shows something more complex. There are no Hindus or Muslims because none of them are sincere, and religion is about inner faith rather than belonging to a sect, or they both worship the same God, so there is no difference between them, but there is nothing about the fact that there should be no Hindus or Muslims or that their Gods should be replaced by a Sikh one, which in any event would not be a personal one like theirs. This is actually non-binary poststructuralist or postmodern logic of a very deep kind, in other words what the modern French

philosophical wrestling with Hegel is leading to. On a related note, the more miraculous or "silly" moments in the janamsakhis (early lives of Guru Nanak) very much remind one of the moments of chaotic non-sense in Lewis Carroll that Deleuze makes such beautiful use of in *Logic of Sense*. Two examples of such sakhis include one in which a brahman who had refused to accept Guru Nanak's uncooked food spends all day trying to dig a cooking-square and keeps on finding (impure) bones and another in which a qazi tries to move the Guru's feet because he is sleeping in a mosque with them facing the *miharab* (that is committing blasphemy), but the *miharab* moves with the Guru's feet. See W. H. McLeod, *op. cit.* (Delhi: OUP, 1996), pp. 35, 45, 60-1, 122-4 and 208-9 for these two sakhis and an interpretation of them that focusses on sifting fact from fiction. This is a perfectly legitimate objective, but it misses how a kind of playful non-sense is used to penetrate through to hyperconnective universe pervaded by Waheguru which is beyond mere human convention. It is no accident that Guru Nanak says a phrase that is from "Siree Raag" at the end of a slight variant on the qazi sakhi: "He is the Master who has made the world bloom; He makes the Universe blossom forth fresh and green." ("so-ee ma-ulaa jin jag ma-oli-aa hari-aa kee-aa sansaaro" *SGGS*, p. 24. There is a real quality of mystery in the janamsakhis and udasis (Guru Nanak's travels) which Deleuzian paradox could help to uncover. It is of course equally relevant to the mixture of quasi-pantheism and God as *nirankar* in Sikh metaphysics already discussed in this article.

⁵⁸ See the excellent J. Williams, *Understanding Poststructuralism*, (Chesham: Acumen, 2005). Five key works

from this period, one each by Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault and Kristeva, are discussed, each with its own individual chapter. *Difference and Repetition* and Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* - the latter was mentioned in note 52 - are two of the works.

⁵⁹ See B. Massumi, *op. cit.* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 44-55, where a scenario that involves escaping a bull in a field is the basis for the author's reflections on the event.

⁶⁰ If one observes others doing the bowing gesture of *matha taykna* before the SGGS in gurdwara or does it oneself, the body language from the outside or the feeling from within has a quality of humility that is not obsequious but dignified. This movement has nothing to do with idolatry, so it is not focussed on an object. Instead one is opened out to the presence of Waheguru, who is everywhere, but in a way that gently fills one's body with that presence: one is not annihilated, so one remains a proactive agent deeply connected with God's *hukam*. *Matha taykna* is one of Sikhism's simple but profound ways of remaining connected with the eventual structure of the universe.